

Excerpts from an article special to the

Globe and Mail, "*Playing to the Pabulum Set*"

by Elee Kraljii Gardiner

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Two of the best children's programs ever are the Kids' Konzerts and Tiny Tots series, both offered by the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra.

The Konzerts, for ages 4 to 11, have run for 18 years and are such a hit with parents that the VSO has developed a number of "lighter note" series for grownups.

That success has finally trickled down to the pabulum set. A year ago, the VSO delivered a younger sibling, Tiny Tots, into the arms of ecstatic parents. Is this the "Mozart effect" in action -- or the grooming of future VSO subscribers?

"Basically we make grape-flavoured cough medicine," says Alan Gove, the VSO's director of marketing. The tactic may be working: The Tots series sold out in its first season, and the orchestra has just reported an overall surplus for the second straight year.

The older series could learn a few tricks from Tiny Tots (which offers a Christmas program on Dec. 9). While the Konzerts are largely attended by regular VSO subscribers, the Tots audience includes families who don't necessarily have classical-music appreciation in their backgrounds, Gove says.

Tots performers Lisa G. Allison and Linda Sebenius, the twin sisters who founded the music-education company Identical Harmony, can take much of the credit for the series' accessibility. Their approach centres on *Carmina Burana* composer Carl Orff's theory of integrating movement and music.

Identical Harmony's smooth-as-pureed-carrots delivery is keyed for a gentle baby world unmarred by Disney marketing tools, so parents best park their cynicism beyond the velvet ropes of the stroller zone near the concession. The little bites of musical theory, such as the mantra "longer, lower; shorter, higher," which explains the effect of instrument size on woodwind sounds, are easily digestible for babies and substantial enough for first-graders.

Once they are hungry for more, the little ones can move up to the big kids' table -- and perhaps help feed the VSO for life.